

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

**The Bell Witch strikes**  
**End of perpetual motion?**  
**Twitches, twigs and treasure**  
**Whose crashed saucers?**  
**Visiting the future**

# 103





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MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## Volume 9 Issue 103

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## In next week's issue

Who is the old lady who calls herself Anna Manahan? Is she, as some maintain, **Anastasia**, the last of the Romanovs? Most people believe the entire family was killed in 1917 – but there is evidence that at least she survived. A very different Russian, the flamboyant **Madame Blavatsky**, who founded the respectable Theosophical Society, boasted of special occult powers. But the SPR (and others) denounced her as an unscrupulous fraud. We examine the claim that there exists an ancient zodiac, formed out of the landscape around **Glastonbury** by members of a pagan cult. And in **UFO psychology** we turn from outer to inner space – our collective unconscious – for the origins of 'little green men'. Lastly, we assess **Harry Oldfield's** exciting new approach to electromagnetic therapy.

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# The Bell Witch strikes

**The most savage and relentless poltergeist on record must surely be the 'Bell Witch', whose systematic persecution of the Bell family of Tennessee, USA, in the early 19th century stopped only at murder. FRANK SMYTH tells the story**

Slaves on a cotton plantation – similar to the one owned by the Bell family – practise a voodoo ceremony. The Bells may have been influenced by such an atmosphere of belief in the paranormal, giving rise to the 'Bell Witch'

IT HAS BECOME almost axiomatic that ghosts do no physical harm to those who experience them. The fear of ghosts, if it comes at all, is usually retrospective. Apparitions are frequently reported as being solid and 'normal' and it is only when they walk away through the wall or disappear as if switched off that the observer realises what he has seen and becomes alarmed. Even the rumbustious poltergeist, whose activities include such apparently dangerous acts as throwing stones, smashing glass and crockery and starting fires, causes little or no bodily damage to its victims.

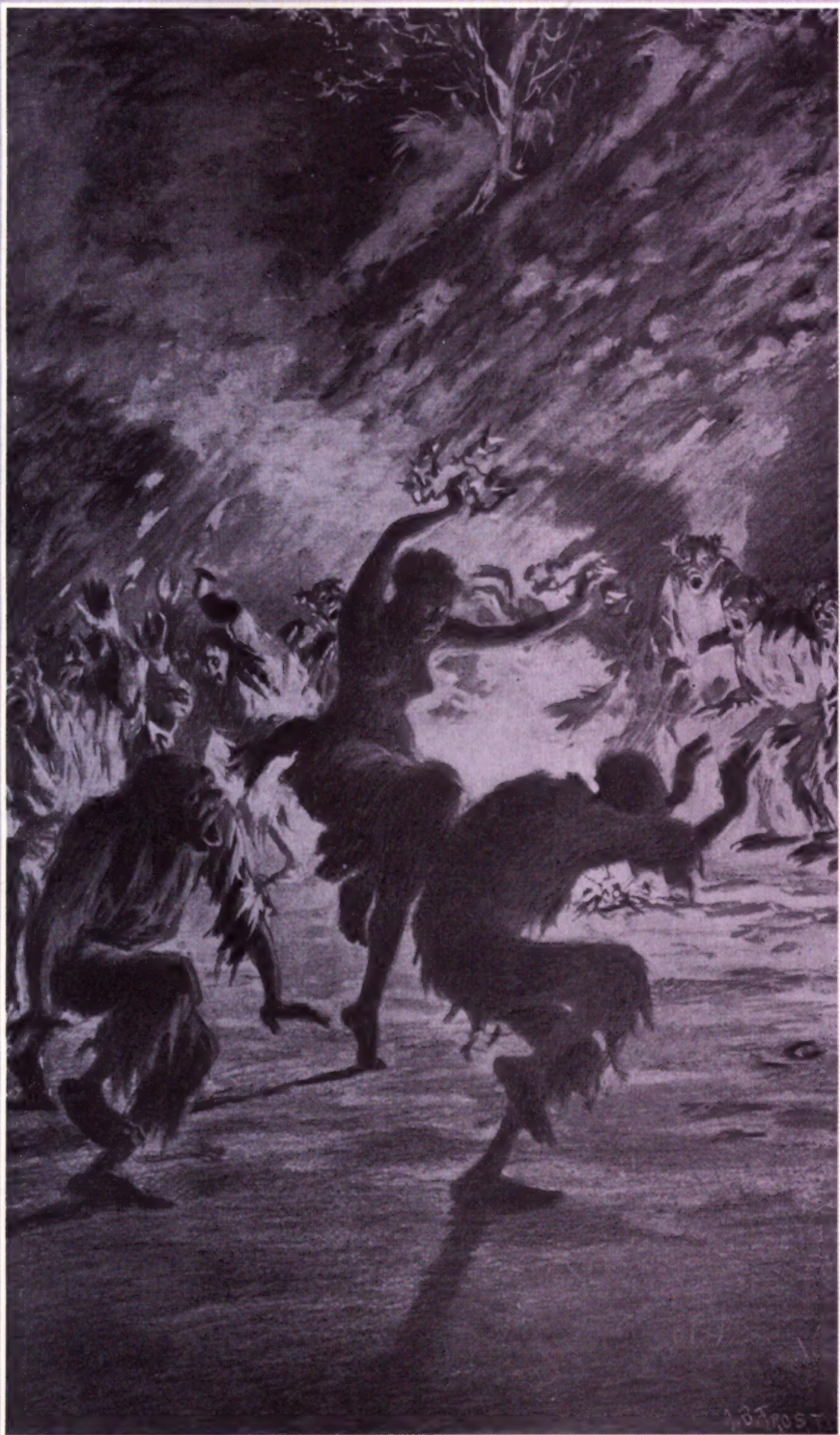
But there is one well-attested case of a 'supernatural' power, which not only killed its victim but apparently set out to do so with deliberate intent, and that was the so-called 'Bell Witch'. The late Dr Nandor Fodor, a Freudian psychiatrist and pioneer of modern psychophysical research, termed it 'America's greatest ghost story'; but if his conclusions are correct it must also rank as one of the world's most bizarre murder mysteries.

The malevolent power that laid siege to the homestead of John Bell and his family in Robertson County, Tennessee, USA, during the year 1817 lay totally outside the experience of that rural but rich community. A century and a quarter had elapsed since America's only serious outbreak of witchcraft mania died down at Salem, Massachusetts, and the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, founding daughters of modern Spiritualism, lay more than 30 years in the future. The term 'poltergeist' was unknown.

Nevertheless the Bells and their neighbours were Bible-belt Christians with a streak of superstition that paralleled that of their slaves; both black and white consulted a 'village wise woman' named Kate Batt. It was natural that they should call their trouble by an old name. As Dr Fodor put it:

The 'Witch', as the haunter was called, serves well as a descriptive term . . . modern poltergeists, no matter how much mischief and destruction they wreak, stop short of murder. The Bell Witch did not, and it only ceased its activities after the death by poisoning of John Bell, the head of the household, whom it tortured and persecuted with a fury of unrelenting savagery.

The phenomena began in 1817 and petered out in the late spring of 1821, some months after the death of John Bell, although they did reoccur briefly seven years later, apparently to fulfil a promise to one of the dead man's sons. During its reign the Witch attracted hordes of ghost hunters, most of them anxious to prove it a hoax. But these all met, according to contemporary records,







Above: the late Dr Nandor Fodor, a psychiatrist who believed that the tale of the Bell Witch was 'America's greatest ghost story', but also a case of externalised, repressed guilt on the part of a member of the Bell family

Below: the Bells were known to be on good terms with their black slaves

with 'egregious defeat'.

Richard Williams Bell, a younger son of the family, wrote a record entitled *Our family trouble* in 1846 when he was 36 years old, and although he was only 10 when the Witch ceased its activity, his account tied in well with later, more detailed records. One of these, published in 1867 by a Clarksville newspaper editor, M. V. Ingram, included interviews with all surviving members of the family and some contemporary witnesses, as well as the testimony of the author, who had himself witnessed the outbreak as a child. Another was a document by John Bell Jr as related to his son Dr Joel Thomas Bell. The definitive version was given in 1934 by Dr Charles Bailey Bell, son of Dr Joel, who lectured on neurosurgery at the University of Nashville's Medical Department, was a consultant at Nashville City Hospital, and a prominent member of several national medical bodies. As a young medical student in 1888 Dr Charles had interviewed his great aunt Elizabeth 'Betsy' Bell about her recollections: then 83, she had in her youth been the centre of the phenomena – and perhaps even an unwitting murderess.

John Bell was a prosperous cotton plantation owner, well-liked and respected by his neighbours and friends, who included General Andrew Jackson, later seventh president of the United States and a witness to the Witch's activities. John and his wife Luce lived in a large, two-storey house with their

nine children. Their domestic servants and plantation hands were, of course, black slaves but – as far as was possible under such conditions – the Bell children mingled with the hands on terms of easy familiarity and friendliness. One of the most outgoing was Betsy Bell, a robust and apparently contented girl of 12 in 1817.

### Disturbing the peace

The manifestations began in the form of knocks and raps on the walls and windows of the house, and increased in power and volume so that by the end of the year they were literally shaking the building to its foundations. Gnawing, scratching and flapping sounds alternated with the rattle of invisible stones on the roof, the clattering of what sounded like heavy chains on the floor, and half-human gulping, choking and 'lip smacking' noises.

Then the force displayed its strength, pulling Richard Bell's hair so violently that it lifted him clear of his bed. He felt 'that the top of his head had been taken off' . . . . Immediately, Joel yelled out in great fright, and next Elizabeth was screaming in her room, and after that something was continually pulling at her hair after she retired to bed.

Up to this point, the family had kept their curious troubles to themselves, but now they let a close friend and neighbour, James Johnson, in on their secret. After witnessing







Above: respectable Puritans arrest a 'witch' during the infamous outbreak of witchcraft mania at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, during which 30 people were accused of sorcery and 19 of them hanged. Although most rural areas – as in Europe – had their 'wise women' and natural psychics, from the end of the Salem trials to 1817, when the Bell Witch first made itself known, paranormality in the United States had not been a burning issue. But then, literally as far as the Bells were concerned, all hell broke loose

the phenomena for himself, Johnson concluded that some intelligence lay behind them, and performed a brief exorcism that seemed to silence the Bell house for a while.

But the Witch returned – and with renewed vigour, slapping Betsy's cheeks until they were crimson and pulling her hair until she screamed with pain. John Bell and James Johnson called in more neighbours to form an investigating committee, partly to keep the tormented Betsy company, and partly to induce the Witch to speak. Betsy spent a night away from home, but the 'trouble followed her with the same severity, disturbing the family where she went as it did at home, nor were we any wise relieved', wrote Richard Bell later. The committee itself seems to have done more harm than good, inviting the force to 'rap the wall, smack its mouth, etc., and in this way the phenomena were gradually developed'.

In fact, the development of the Witch's voice seems to have come about under the urgings of the committee. At first it was low and inarticulate – a thin whistling sound – but gradually it turned into a weak faltering whisper and towards the end of its career was loud and raucous. Unlike the other physical phenomena, which took place only after dark – although usually in lamplit rooms – the voice began to be heard both day and night, and came from any direction. And as the

voice grew in strength, so did the Witch's violence.

'The blows were heard distinctly, like the open palm of a heavy hand, while the sting was keenly felt,' and they were rained indiscriminately on anyone who happened to be around, but particularly on Betsy Bell and her father John.

From the beginning the force seemed to centre on Betsy; as the voice developed, so the formerly robust girl began to suffer fainting fits and breathing difficulties that lasted up to half an hour at a time. During these attacks the Witch remained silent, but as soon as Betsy had recovered it began to talk again. The obvious conclusion was that, somehow, Betsy was producing sounds by ventriloquism, but a doctor who visited the house laid his hands over her mouth at the time the voice was heard, 'and soon satisfied himself that she was in no way connected with these sounds'.

### Just a song at twilight . . .

When the voice first developed, its utterances tended to be of a pious nature. It could reproduce, word for word, the Sunday sermons of the two local parsons, imitating their tones exactly. It sang beautifully, and recited tracts from the Bible. Unfortunately this was only a temporary phase. The voice soon began uttering obscenities – which were particularly distressing to a Bible-belt family. It also alarmed them by claiming to be 'Old Kate Batt's witch'.

The Witch's ability to produce disgusting odours was demonstrated on several occasions, once to local witness William Porter when the Witch got into bed with him and twisted his bedclothes off him 'just like a boy would roll himself in a quilt'. Porter leaped out of bed and picked up the roll of bedclothes, intending to throw them into the fire. He said:

I discovered it was very weighty and smelled awful. I had not got halfway across the room before the luggage got so heavy and became so offensive that I was compelled to drop it on the floor and rush out of doors for a breath of fresh air. The odour . . . was the most offensive stench I ever smelled . . . absolutely stifling.

When Porter had recovered, however, he came back into the room and shook out the bedclothes, only to find the mysterious extra weight had vanished – and the stink had evaporated.

Like many other poltergeists, the Witch produced 'apports'. During Luce Bell's Bible study meetings it took to dropping fresh fruit onto the table or into the laps of those present, and once, on Betsy's birthday, produced a large basket of oranges, bananas, grapes and nuts, claiming: 'Those came from the West Indies. I brought them myself.'

But perhaps more in keeping with the Witch's real nature was the scatological



## Great hauntings

prank it played on Betsy Bell, when a local quack doctor offered her a potion to rid her of the power that tormented her. It was an unpleasant mixture, and the quack warned her that it would make her very ill. A 'copious evacuation' of the stomach followed, the Witch roaring with laughter at the surprise of the household when Betsy's vomit and excrement were found to be full of pins and needles. Richard Bell wrote:

They were real brass pins and needles. Mother kept them as long as she lived. I have seen the pins and needles myself. As a matter of course, Betsy could not have lived with such a conglomeration in her stomach, and the only solution to the matter was that the Witch dropped the pins and needles in the excrement unobserved.

### A public announcement

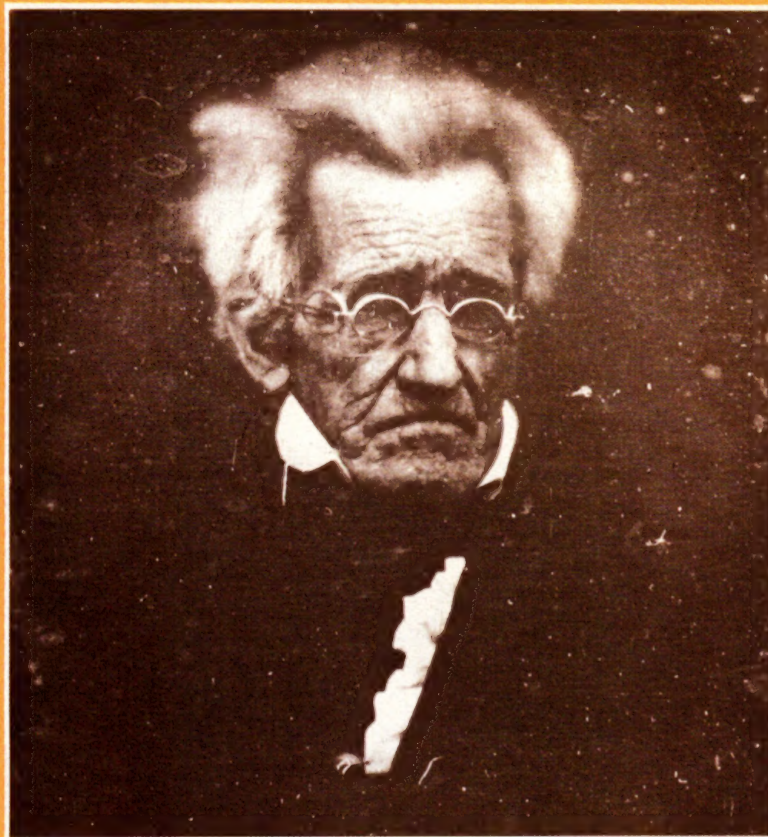
As time went on the Witch ceased its physical attacks on Betsy, but began to torment her emotionally. She had become engaged in her early teens to a local man, Joshua Gardner, to whom, apparently, everyone in the family and neighbourhood thought she was ideally suited. But from the moment it developed the power of speech, the Witch derided Joshua and advised against the match, whispering 'Please Betsy Bell, don't have Joshua Gardner, please Betsy Bell, don't marry Joshua Gardner.' Eventually it grew sharper in its remonstrations, making embarrassing revelations about the young couple's relationship in front of friends, and promising that Betsy would never know a moment's peace if she married Joshua. Eventually, 'quite hysterical and worn out in despair', she returned his engagement ring.

But behind all these developments lay the Witch's implacable hatred for John Bell, head of the family. From the start the Witch had sworn that it would 'torment Old Jack Bell' to the end of his life – and it made good its threat.

On 19 December 1820, John Bell was discovered in his bed in a deep stupor and could not be roused. His son John went to the medicine cabinet but instead of the prescribed medicine he found 'a smokey looking vial, which was about one-third full of dark-coloured liquid'.

The doctor arrived in time to hear the Witch crowing: 'It's useless for you to try and relieve Old Jack – I have got him this time; he will never get up from that bed again.' Asked about the strange medicine, it said: 'I put it there, and gave Old Jack a big dose out of it last night while he was fast asleep, which fixed him.'

Neither the doctor nor any member of the household could explain the presence of the mystery bottle, but a rather arbitrary test was made of its contents; the doctor dunked a straw into the mixture and wiped it onto the tongue of the Bells' pet cat. 'The cat jumped and whirled over a few times, stretched out,



### Witch on the wagon

When Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), seventh president of the United States, was a general in the army he took a wagon, pulled by a team of army horses, to visit his old friend John Bell and, to his horror and surprise, was treated to a startling demonstration of the Bell Witch's superhuman physical strength.

As Jackson drove up to the house, the wagon suddenly ground to a halt, despite the enormous efforts of driver and horses, straining at the traces. Unable to find any natural cause for the stoppage, the General cried, 'By the eternal boys! It is the Witch!' At this point a sharp, metallic voice – apparently coming from the nearby bushes – said: 'All right, General, let the wagon move.' And the wagon started to roll forward once again towards the Bell house.

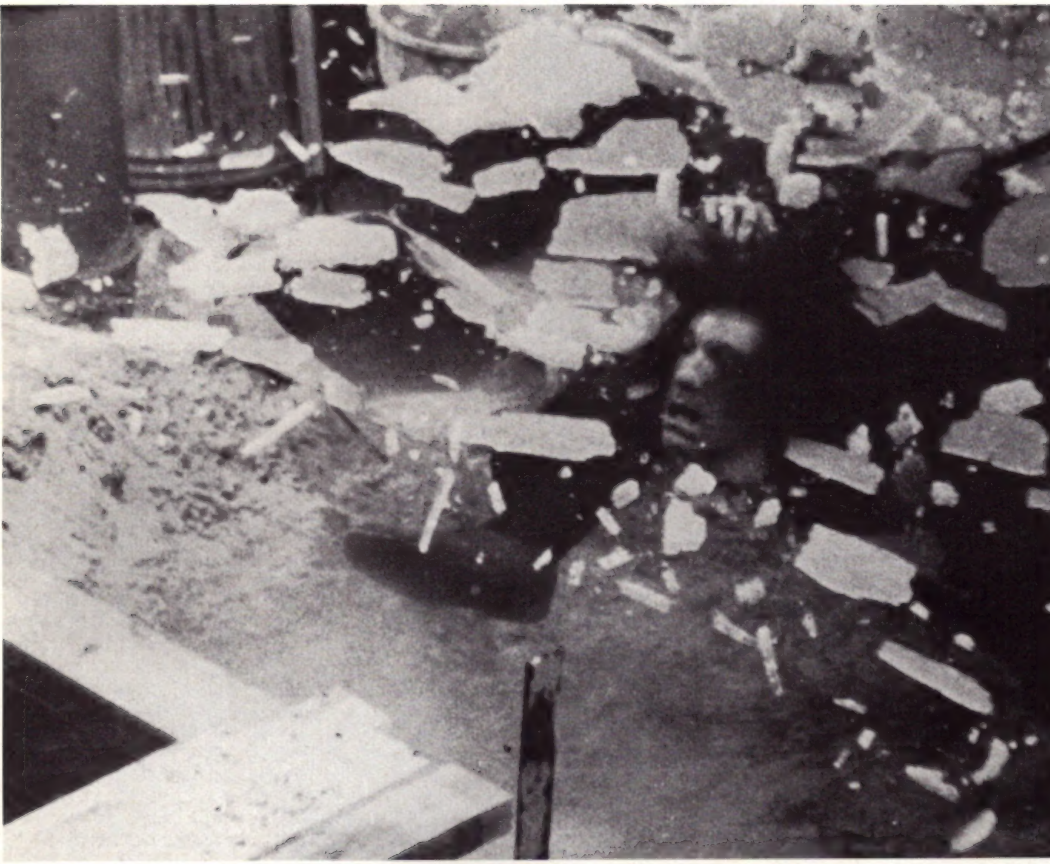
kicked, and died very quick.'

The doctor's next action would be unforgivable today, and even in his own time would have drawn suspicion had he done it in Europe, but his scientific training seems to have been overcast by the superstition of rural 19th-century Tennessee. He threw the bottle into the fire, disposing of the Witch's brew for good.

The following morning John Bell was found dead in his bed; the Witch marked his passing by singing ribald songs at his funeral.

After the death of John Bell, the energy of the Witch seemed to dissipate. Its ribaldry





Above: Hollywood's expression of paranormal violence – a scene from *The omen* (1976). The disruption occasioned by real-life poltergeists is often more psychological than physical, but the Bell Witch attacked its victims on all fronts: socially, psychologically and physically

vanished almost totally, and when questioned by John Bell Jr it gave introspective if rather confused answers. Richard Bell, writing years afterwards, surmised that, from the start, it had 'but two purposes, seemingly . . . one was the persecution of Father to the end of his life. The other, the vile purpose of destroying the anticipated happiness that thrilled the heart of Betsy'.

Apparently, having achieved these ends it was content to go. The final phenomenon, which to Dr Fodor was 'highly symbolic of guilt release', took place after supper in the spring of 1821; something like a cannonball rolled down the chimney and burst in a puff of smoke, and a clear voice called out: 'I'm going, and will be gone for seven years.'

This promise was fulfilled. At the time Mrs Bell and her sons Richard and Joel were the only occupants of the homestead – Betsy having married another man.

Scratching sounds were heard, and half-hearted pulling of bedclothes felt. The family agreed to ignore the manifestations, and after a fortnight the Witch vanished for good, pausing only to tell John Jr that it would return again in 'one hundred years and seven' to one of his descendants. As Dr Fodor remarks, this doubtful honour should have fallen to Dr Charles Bailey Bell, but the year of 1935 came and went, and the Bell Witch failed to keep its tryst.

So what actually occurred on the Bell plantation? Even allowing for distortion of some of the details with the passage of time, it seems that the principal events did take

Below: a statue of a Roman house god, or family guardian, known as the *lar familiaris*. Although in many Roman households religion was treated as a mere formality, the household gods were often genuinely revered. Keeping evil out of one's home and family circle has always preoccupied mankind; but the Bell family fell foul of this omnipresent threat. Even in our so-called 'progressive' society exorcists are kept busy ejecting 'evil forces' from family homes







place. In 1849 the *Saturday Evening Post* investigated the case and printed an article alleging that the 12-year-old Betsy had engineered the whole thing. The Bell family lawyers obtained a substantial amount in damages and the magazine printed an apology and a retraction. The hoax theory, then, seems patently absurd.

Dr Fodor pointed out that Betsy's fainting and dizzy spells – immediately followed by the voice of the Witch – are very similar to the symptoms exhibited by a medium going into a trance. On the other hand the Witch, although describing itself as 'a spirit from everywhere' on one occasion, denied all knowledge of life after death. Indeed, after the death of John Bell and towards the end of its career, the Witch frankly told his son, who had asked about the fate of his father's spirit, that it could imitate the dead man's voice to perfection, but had no intention of deceiving the family. People who had died did not talk to those left behind, insisted the Witch. To press home its point it gave a dramatic demonstration. John was asked to look out of the window at the smooth snow outside. As he and the rest of the company watched, footprints appeared, seemingly made by an

Brazil, a country much preoccupied by Spiritism, also suffers from frequent and sometimes severe outbreaks of paranormal vandalism. In one case a pet parrot fell victim to a poltergeist's spite – and had its tail feathers singed (top), and in another a group of people discovered that the settee on which they were sitting was being slashed by an invisible assailant (above). But few people have suffered the indignities and horrors of the Bell family

invisible man walking towards the house. The Witch challenged John to take his dead father's boots and match them against those in the snow. When he refused, the Witch said that this was the answer to 'all the foolish people' who might think that the dead could come back'.

For his part, 'Old Jack' Bell showed all the signs of what a modern psychiatrist would recognise as symptoms of acute guilt: a nervous tic, an inability to eat and speak, and a general withdrawal from the world. Despite some evidence that an unknown person may have administered the poison that killed him, the strong possibility remains that he killed himself, goaded beyond endurance by

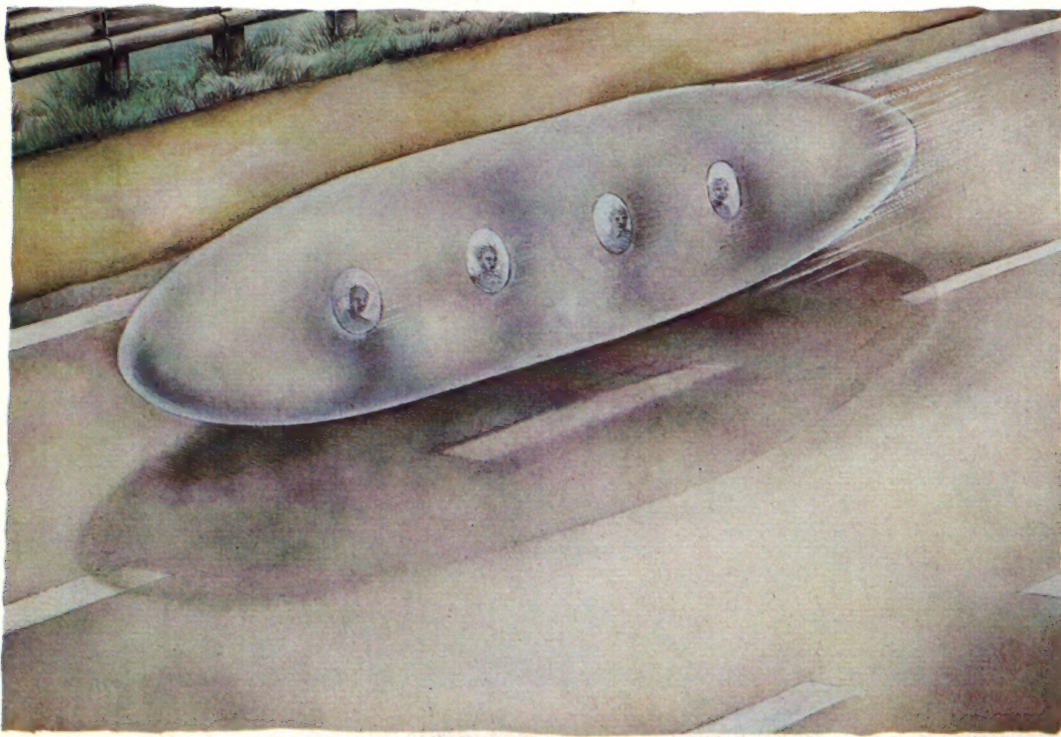
the disturbances. This might well explain the doctor's arbitrary destruction of the evidence – the poison bottle: by doing so he would remove the strong taint of suicide from a respectable, staunchly Christian family.

Dr Fodor concluded that Betsy Bell suffered from a split personality, that in some mysterious way part of her subconscious mind had taken on a life of its own and literally plagued her father to death. The psychology of such splits is still a mystery, and similar cases are rare – but when they do occur some powerful emotional shock is usually the triggering factor. Dr Fodor made the 'purely speculative' guess that John Bell had interfered with his daughter sexually during her early childhood, and that the onset of puberty and her awakening sexuality stirred the long suppressed memory – bringing into being the Bell Witch.

On the other hand, he admitted that no conventional psychologist would credit split personalities with manifestations, and powers outside the range of the body. Dr Fodor concluded: 'Obviously we are dealing with facts for which we have no adequate theories within normal or abnormal psychology.'



# 'This is how it will be'



**Science-fiction writers exert their imaginations to the utmost to portray the far distant future.**

**JOAN FORMAN relates the experiences of some ordinary people who seem to have caught glimpses of what the fantasy writers would love to see**

MOST PRECOGNITIVE EXPERIENCES relate to events in the near future. A minority seem to 'view' the more distant future – years rather than weeks or months ahead. And a very few belong to a totally different category. They appear to take the subject to a time quite outside his own earthly lifetime, perhaps even centuries ahead. These are the cases that stretch belief to its limits.

One such experience occurred to a British family when on holiday in Germany. They were travelling in their car on one of the motorways. There was nothing particularly noteworthy about the day or the weather conditions, and as far as they could later judge nothing had occurred beforehand to prepare them for the incident.

Presently they became aware of a vehicle approaching them in the opposite carriageway, apparently travelling faster than they were. It was not this that drew their attention, however, so much as the vehicle's shape. It was long and cylindrical, and there were what appeared to be round windows, or portholes, in the side. And out of those windows, looking straight at them, were four



Travelling on one of the motorways that criss-cross Germany (above), a family of British holidaymakers saw an extraordinary apparition – a silvery torpedo-shaped object (top) travelling fast in the opposite carriageway, with frightened faces peering at them through the vehicle's round windows

very frightened faces. Needless to say, the family presented equally alarmed faces at their own car windows!

Afterwards the travellers were unable to liken the machine to anything they had seen before. They do not appear to have observed any wheels on the vehicle, nor were they aware of any engine noise. Had the object been seen in the sky it might have been classified as a UFO. On the ground it looked like a vision of the far-distant future, a machine that was the remote descendant of the modern car. The holidaymakers were, not surprisingly, unnerved.

Another remarkable experience occurred to a London man, a Mr D'Alessio, when he was taking a walk in the tree-lined street in which he lived. The evening was warm and





pleasant, and he walked slowly, enjoying the weather.

It was then that he began to feel, as he described it, 'strange, as if in a dream'. The sensation was not new to him, for he had had similar feelings in the past, and they had invariably preceded some form of time dislocation or out-of-the-body experience.

On this occasion he continued to be perfectly well-aware of who he was and where he was, although he felt that his personality was somewhat different from usual: he was a happier, more relaxed and less tense person. He felt that he was in the same familiar location, but he was also certain that the time was not the present. He seemed to be in the far future. A haze covered the entire scene 'and this haze trembled and stirred quite uniformly.'

He was particularly impressed by the fact that everything was extremely quiet; the traffic in particular made no sound. The conviction came to him that this traffic of the future could move not only in silence but also in complete safety. He felt that 'accidents are no longer possible, because vehicles cannot crash or collide any more.'

Another aspect of the scene struck the witness forcibly: the texture of the road surface and of the dwellings. They were made of the same synthetic substance, 'very smooth and silvery and beneficial to one's well-being'. It seemed to have qualities that no material in our own time has.

Mr D'Alessio continued to stroll along the street, enjoying the sensation and thinking: 'This is how it will be.' After a few minutes the haze faded and both the scene and his

Gilston Road, Fulham – the London street in which a Mr D'Alessio had the conviction that he had suddenly slipped into the future – into a time when the traffic was silent and vehicles could not collide. The road and buildings were made of a smooth and silvery substance. This was one of several time dislocations and out-of-the-body experiences that had occurred in Mr D'Alessio's life

sensations returned to normal. He was left with a feeling of considerable happiness.

Mr D'Alessio regards his timeslips as involuntary and not capable of being produced to order in any circumstances. They are always accompanied by the slightly dreamy, though not sleepy, sensation described. As he says: 'It is as if something strange and yet familiar is about to happen [but] at a different rate.'

This disjointed, 'out of phase' sensation is a common accompaniment of all timeslips, whether into the past or the future. They are also frequently marked by a silvery or hazy light over the scene and by a noticeable absence of sound.

### Timeslip in Tombland

A similar incident occurred to an elderly man whom we shall call Mr Raven, who lives in Norfolk, in East Anglia. One day in early autumn he and his wife made one of their rare visits to the county town of Norwich. They spent part of their visit in the central shopping area and then wandered into the district known as Tombland. This was the site of the city's market in medieval times, and is bounded by shops on one side and by the cathedral, and buildings fronting it, on the other. The main street through Tombland is usually crowded with cars and people.

Mr and Mrs Raven found themselves in a narrow side street. The husband left his wife waiting on the pavement while he went to a nearby public toilet. But instead of being away for a few minutes, as he had expected, Mr Raven was away for an hour. The story he told his worried wife when he returned



was a strange and troubling one.

He had entered the lavatory, he thought, by a door that opened directly from the street and that was at street level. When he wished to come out he saw another door in a different position from the first, with a flight of steps that led upward – to the street. He took this exit, only to find himself in a street quite different from that which he had left. It was like Tombland – but not the Tombland he had left.

Traffic was streaming along this street in a continuous, unbroken flow, moving so fast that it was quite impossible for a pedestrian to cross the road at any point. There seemed to be few people about and the only form of traffic control was a set of lights flashing alternately red and green without intermission. Warehouses and industrial buildings now stood where the cathedral and its associated buildings had been.

He stood in bewilderment for a long time and then began to wander up and down the nearby streets, trying to find his wife. He has no idea to this day how he did find her; but eventually he found himself in the narrow street that he had left, where he saw his wife, by now very anxious, still waiting for him.

### Elements of doubt

Mr Raven felt that he may have seen the distant future of Norwich. But there are certain elements in the story that throw doubt on this explanation of his experience. The first is that the single entrance of the only public lavatory in the Tombland area is not at ground level but is approached by descending steps. In the second place, red and green traffic lights do exist nearby today, in the form of the pedestrian crossing at the top of the hill, about 70 yards (64 metres) away. The traffic lights do not flash red and green but intermittently flash amber, and the pedestrian crossing light flashes green at times.

Nevertheless the inexplicable fact is that Mr Raven did not see the cathedral and its associated buildings, which are present in Tombland today, but did see industrial-style buildings, which are not. The 'lost time' of an hour is puzzling, too, for it would be difficult for Mr Raven to be lost for that length of time in such a small area if he had merely become confused about his whereabouts. And the traffic, though it always moves fast in this area, does not maintain a smooth, unbroken flow. Furthermore the place is usually crowded with pedestrians at that time of day.

How can these long-term timeslips occur? To this question we can proffer only intelligent guesses. In cases where scenes from the past are witnessed by a present-day subject, it may be that some form of recording of an actual event is stored in the physical environment, capable, under the right conditions, of being 'replayed' and 'picked up' by a witness whose brain is properly attuned.

The Erpingham Gate (below) of Norwich Cathedral is one of the conspicuous features of the city's Tombland district. Yet neither it nor any other recognisable landmark could be seen by a timeslip subject, 'Mr Raven', when, on leaving the public lavatory (bottom), he spent an hour wandering – apparently in the distant future. Warehouses stood where familiar buildings should have been, and instead of the clogged traffic of today there was an unbroken, fast-moving stream of vehicles

Or it may be that the memory of some former incarnation is stored in the brain of the modern observer and is evoked by the combination of, say, a particular place, temperature and state of the light.

Precognition does not fit into either of these models. But many scientists do not look on the idea with disfavour. 'In physics, everything that is *not* forbidden occurs. And physics does *not* forbid the transmission of information from the future to the present.' These are physicists speaking, the Americans Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ. The behaviour of subatomic particles suggests that information travelling backwards in time is not unknown (see page 857).

The author's own theory is that all matter contains the 'blueprint' of its own future, and there are occasions when this pattern superimposes itself on our workaday present. Then we see events from our own future.

Visions of the future beyond our own life span may also be explicable in this way; but in such cases the 'blueprint' must lie in the surroundings and not in the subject, though it is the latter's brain that translates the information into experiences of sounds and images. But how such information is stored and 'replayed' remains a mystery.



### Further reading

Joan Forman, *The mask of time*, Corgi 1981  
 Joan Forman, *The haunted South*, Hale 1978  
 Edgar Mitchell, *Psychic exploration*, Putnam (New York) 1974



Few people realise that water divining is only one aspect of dowsing – the technique of searching for objects or minerals with the aid of a rod, forked stick or pendulum. TOM GRAVES, a professional dowser, describes this mysterious skill

DOWSING IS ONE OF THE FEW AREAS of the paranormal that has measurable results with real practical value. Traditionally the dowser looked for minerals or divined for water; nowadays the professional is likely to be found looking for breaks in pipes or predicting failures in power cables. Prosaic matters, tackled in a routine manner – and yet, after centuries of study, we seem, if anything, to be further away from any understanding of how dowsing works.

Everything about the origin of dowsing is obscure. Even the term has no history: it has many variations, such as 'dousing', 'jousing' and the like, and the word seems to be just one of many dialect versions. According to Sir William Barrett, the subject's most thorough historian, dowsing has no place in the divination or the water-finding techniques of the ancient world. In fact the first real mention of the use of the divining rod in dowsing was not published until 1430, in a



## Twitches, twigs and treasure





Left: Andrew Beasley, an Irish dowser, conducts a search with a map and a pendulum. He is frequently asked to find cattle or sheep lost in the rural area where he lives

Right: dowsing as a method of mineral prospecting in the 16th century. In this woodcut from *De re metallica*, by the German mineralogist Agricola (Georg Bauer), published in 1556, a forked twig is stripped from a tree in the background and used as a dowsing instrument by the two figures marked A

Opposite below: two styles of dowsing. In an illustration from a work published in 1733, the dowser firmly grips a forked twig (left). Tom Graves, who has been called Britain's best-known dowser, traces a ley using a pendulum (right). This ley passes through Glastonbury Tor, visible in the background

Below: different manners of holding the divining rod, from a 17th-century treatise on occult physics by the Abbé de Villemont. The same diversity can be found among modern dowsers

German manuscript written by a mine surveyor.

At the time divining seems to have been used exclusively for mining, to find deposits of coal and ores. Agricola's classic treatise on mining, *De re metallica*, published in 1556, includes a detailed discussion of the subject, with a woodcut showing the various stages of divining for coal. By the end of that century further references appear showing divining to have been in routine use for many a year.

But not, it seems, for water finding. It was not until halfway through the following century that a French aristocrat, the Baroness de Beausoleil, adapted the use of the forked twig to find water supplies – the first mention of dowsing in what is now its best-known form, water divining. The French had a succession of 'star' dowsers, such as Jacques Aymar in the 17th century and Barthélemy Bleton in the 18th century, who attracted a fair amount of academic interest. But the newly rising sciences had no room for anything inexplicable in their terms, and for the next two centuries dowsing was consigned to the intellectual junk-heap, classified as ignorance, superstition and the workings of the Devil. One condemnatory work is interesting, though, in showing the incredible range of instruments used by dowsers at the beginning of the 18th century: not just forked twigs, but almost anything that would give the same effect, from a pair of scissors or a bucket handle to a twisted German sausage!

Most of the dowsers of these times were 'naturals', people with the perhaps unfortunate gift of twitching a little when they passed over water. When this small reflex movement was amplified by the fork they held, the result was a dipping of the rod. It worked – not without mistakes, failures or downright dishonesty at times, but well enough to be a routine part of country life. Many of these dowsers were professional



well-sinkers; some, like John Mullins at the end of the 19th century, even worked on the basis of 'no water, no pay' – and well-boring is an expensive business.

A good example of the kind of work Mullins and his contemporaries handled is quoted by Barrett in *The divining rod*.

At Shepton Mallet Station on the Somerset and Dorset Railway, it was decided to sink a well close to the rails to supply water for the locomotives. We had sunk a depth of 250 feet [75 metres] entirely through blue lias rock as dense and hard as possible, and as dry as a bone, and began to look upon it as a forlorn hope. After much hesitation and fear lest it should turn out to be a hoax – we were very incredulous – it was decided to ask the advice of Mr Mullins, who came at once, and with very little trouble discovered for us close at hand that for which we had sought for so long. The most favourable spot was found to be about 50 feet [15 metres] from our well. Mr Mullins, from his observations of the action of the forked twig, advised us to drive a heading about 50 feet [15 metres] down the well. This was done, and when at that spot our miners had to rush up and out for their lives, leaving behind them their steel drills, hammers, clothes etc. The well soon filled up, and when we left in 1879 the water







Left: John Mullins, who was described by Sir William Barrett in the early 1900s as 'without doubt the most remarkably successful dowser of whom we possess records'. He was a stonemason when he discovered his gift in 1859; it was not until 1882 that he formed a company to find water by dowsing and to sink wells. Only a few failures on his part are known, in contrast with many hundreds of successes

Below: a test of Barthélemy Bleton, from the French province of Dauphiné, famed for its dowsers. Bleton was required to trace the course of the underground aqueduct of Arcueil in the garden of the Luxembourg Palace in Paris. He did this with great precision and successfully repeated the feat – now blindfolded – many times, before crowds of spectators

people, working solely by holding a pendulum over a map. His book *Principles and practice of radiesthesia*, published in 1935, details some 20 cases, including that of a missing cow that had fallen over a cliff. The book also details his work in a bewildering variety of fields, from minerals to medicine to areas bordering on traditional magic.

One field that was developed extensively by these new dowsers between the wars was the use of dowsing as a diagnostic tool in medicine – so much so that the term 'radiesthesia' came to be applied to medical dowsing alone. It was not uncommon to find a consultant waving a pendulum over a patient; the pendulum would 'answer' a series of questions by gyrating in one direction or the other. One such consultant was Dr H. Tomlinson, who published in 1958 the first reasoned account of the mechanism of aluminium poisoning, using 'medical radiesthesia' as a diagnostic tool. Without it, he said in his book *Aluminium utensils and disease*, he considered himself 'blind, deaf and dumb'.

The practice may have been frowned upon by the medical profession, but nothing was done to restrain it, especially as the results were good in the hands of skilled physicians who knew what they were doing. However, when these dowsers moved into

was within 12 feet [3.5 metres] of the surface.

At this time dowsing was used only for water finding; it had little other use except for the occasional parlour game of finding hidden gold coins. But at the beginning of this century the other aspects of dowsing underwent a revival, particularly under the auspices of French clerics such as the Abbé Mermet and the new national dowsing groups. The applications, the techniques and every other facet of the subject suddenly became wider, more carefully studied – and more bizarre.

For example, a new instrument was added to the dowser's toolkit: the pendulum, typically a builder's plumb-bob or a small stone on the end of a piece of thread. With it came a whole new range of techniques and, more important, a new way of thinking about dowsing – using it as a general-purpose 'finding tool' rather than confining it to searching for water, minerals or the like. Most important of all, almost all of these new dowsers had taught themselves – and no particular 'gift' was involved, just hard work, like the learning of any other skill. They gave their forms of dowsing a new name – radiesthesia, 'sensation of radiations' – and promptly proved that what they were working with could hardly be radiations in the normal sense, because they produced reliable results working from a map rather than on the site.

Using these new techniques, the Abbé Mermet gained a great reputation in the 1930s for locating the bodies of missing







treatment, using the 'radionic box' of George de la Warr, an English engineer, the medical profession indeed became upset.

Treatment with this sophisticated instrument was, to say the least, complicated. A 'sample' from the patient – typically a blood spot or a urine sample – was placed in a tube between two magnets. The magnets were adjusted and a sequence of numbers was set up on various dials. These were said to be the frequency of the radiations of the illness affecting the patient. The reverse sequence was then set up and, via the medium of the 'sample', was transmitted back to the patient to counteract the illness. All most scientific-sounding.

However, the doctors did have a point: behind the impressive array of knobs, dials, switches and magnets on the radionic box was empty space, sawdust and very little else – certainly nothing that made sense in physical terms. The fact remains, though, that in many cases it worked. But, despite the maze of theories about 'etheric radiations' and the like, *why* it worked remains unexplained.

Another field in which the dowsers were active was archaeology. A good example of this work was the discovery of an older set of barracks beneath Kensington Barracks in west London. They were found in 1938, quite accidentally, by a dowser tracing the course of a Tudor brick-built water culvert. The dowser, L. L. Latham, found an awkward bend in the culvert, apparently going round something made of concrete. Latham then traced this and claimed that there was a

Above: a selection of pendulum bobs used in medical radiesthesia. With a 'witness' of the patient nearby – a spot of blood or urine, or even his signature – the pendulum is suspended over the chart of remedies. The practitioner points to each in turn, and when the pendulum begins to swing or rotate the corresponding remedy is indicated

Right: George de la Warr, an English engineer, became interested in radionics during the Second World War and, with his wife Marjorie, devised a number of radionic instruments for the diagnosis and treatment of disease

rectilinear structure beneath two of the 18th-century barrack buildings. Sure enough, 17 feet (5 metres) down, there were the concrete foundations of a Roman fort. Further investigations will have to wait until the long-scheduled demolition of the surviving buildings.

Perhaps the most influential writer on the dowser's view of archaeology is Guy Underwood. Like other dowsers before him, and many more since, he found a curious coincidence: water lines (or whatever it is that the dowser perceives as underground water) converge on sacred sites such as churches and prehistoric henges. Beneath every key point, he discovered, there was a 'knot' of these lines, a kind of hidden spring. Underwood was convinced that the sites had been built on specifically to mark the convergence of these natural lines.

To Underwood, and to many of his followers, the sites of the past represent the work of some kind of priesthood who were aware of these properties of nature – using them to settle boundary disputes, to decide the course of tracks and paths, and many other matters. Everything we see was predetermined by these patterns of the past.

*You can learn the basic techniques of dowsing, and their uses. See page 2098*





**Would the course of science and history have been changed if Orffyreus had not smashed his wonderful wheel to bits? ARCHIE ROY speculates on whether this inventor had built the world's first perpetual motion machine**

THE MARVELLOUS MACHINE built by Orffyreus under the patronage of the German Landgrave, Duke Karl, created much excitement in the castle of Weissenstein, where it stood. Was this the perpetual motion machine everyone had said was impossible?

A number of eminent men – scientists, careful observers, intellectuals with a knowledge of mechanics – examined the great wheel. All testified in writing that they could detect no fraud. Some wrote accounts of the machine to other eminent scholars.

For example, Professor W. J. Gravesande, a well-known mathematician of Leyden, wrote to Sir Isaac Newton:

It is an hollow wheel, or kind of drum, about 14 inches [35 centimetres] thick and 12 feet [3.5 metres] diameter; being very light, as it consists of several cross-pieces of wood framed together; the whole of which is covered over with canvas, to prevent the inside from being seen. Through the centre of this wheel or drum runs an axis of about 6 inches [15 centimetres] diameter, terminated at both ends by iron axes of about three-quarters of an inch [2 centimetres] diameter upon which the machine turns. I have examined these axes, and am firmly persuaded that nothing from without the wheel in the least contributes to its motion. When I turned it but gently, it always stood still as soon as I took away my hand; but when I gave it any tolerable degree of velocity, I was always obliged to stop it again by force; for when I let it go, it acquired in two or three turns its greatest velocity, [then] it revolved for



25 or 26 times in a minute.

Baron Fischer, architect to the Emperor of Austria, described his experiments with Orffyreus's wheel in a letter to J. T. Desaguliers, FRS, who worked on the early steam engine:

I must assure you that I am quite persuaded that there exists no reason why this machine should not have the name of Perpetual Motion given to it; and I have good reason to believe that it is one, according to the experiments which I have been allowed to make by permission of His Serene Highness . . . who had the patience to be present at the trials which I made during two hours.

It is a wheel which is 12 feet [3 metres] in diameter, covered with oil-cloth. At every turn of the wheel can be heard about eight weights, which fall gently on the side towards which the wheel turns. This wheel turns with astonishing rapidity, making 26 turns in a minute when moving freely. Having tied a cord to the axle, to turn an Archimedeian screw for raising water, the wheel then made 20 turns in a minute. This I noticed several times by my watch and I always found the same regularity.

I then stopped the wheel with much difficulty, holding on to the circumference with both hands. An attempt to stop it suddenly would raise a man from the ground.

Having stopped it in this manner, it remained stationary; and (here, Sir, is the greatest proof of it being a Perpetual Motion) I restarted it very gently, to see if it would of itself regain its former rapidity – which I doubted,

A large, multi-towered stone castle ruin sits atop a rocky hill. The castle has several towers and battlements, some of which are partially collapsed. The hill is covered with green grass and some trees. The sky is clear and blue.

# The wreck of a dream



believing, as they had said in London, that it only preserved for a long time the impetus of the impulse first communicated. But, to my great astonishment, I observed that the rapidity of the wheel augmented little by little until it had made two turns, and then it regained its former speed, until I observed by my watch that it made the same 26 turns a minute as before, when acting freely; and 20 turns when it was attached to the screw to raise water.

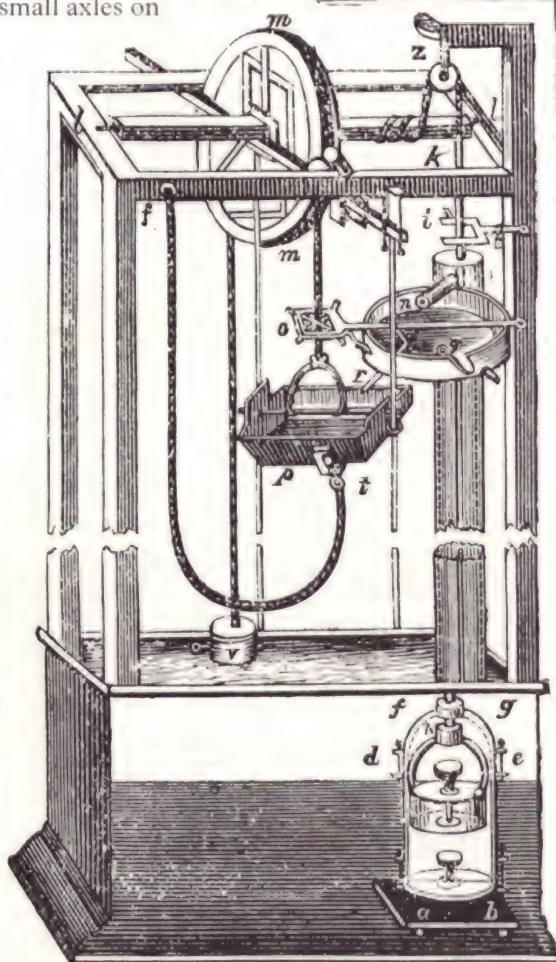
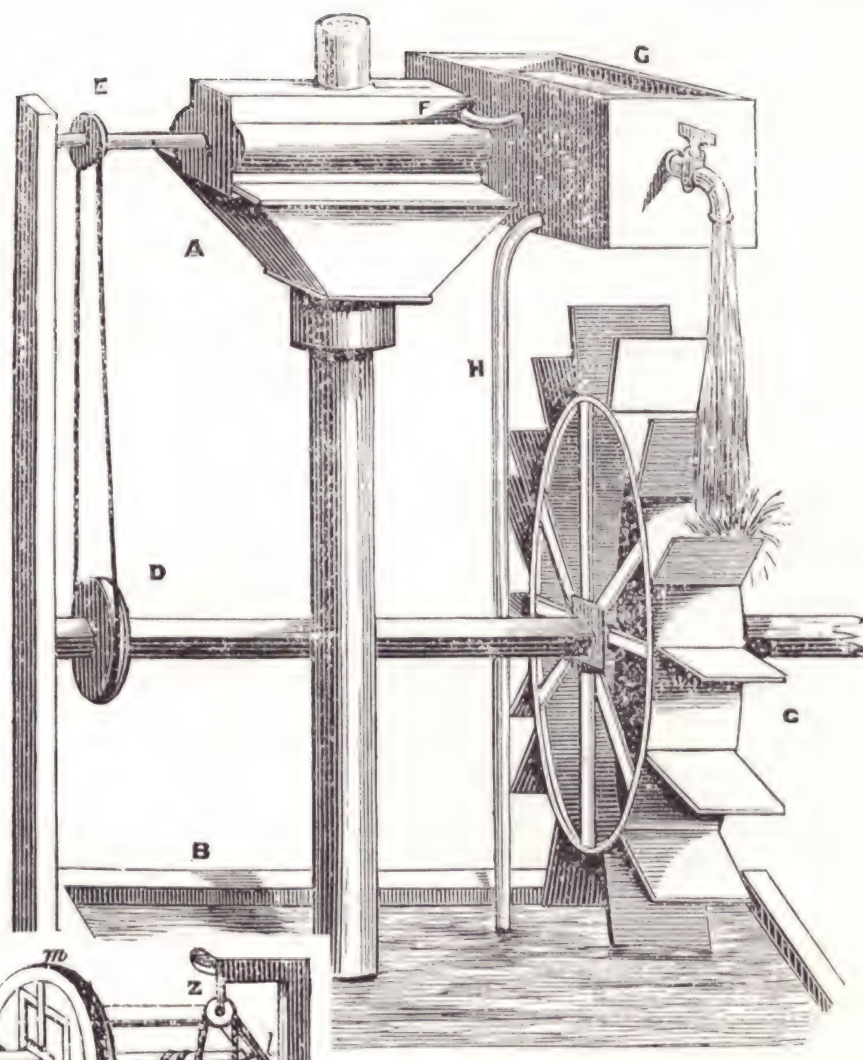
This experiment, Sir, showing the speed of the wheel to augment, from the very slow movement that I gave to it, to an extraordinary rapid one, convinces me more than if I had only seen the wheel moving a whole year, which would not have persuaded me that it was perpetual motion, because it might have diminished little by little until it ceased altogether; but to gain speed instead of losing it, and to increase that speed to a certain degree in spite of the resistance of the air and the friction of the axles, makes me unable to see how anyone can deny the truth of so describing it.

I also turned it in a contrary way, when the wheel performed as before. I carefully examined the axles of the wheel, to see if there was any hidden artifice; but I was unable to see anything more than the two small axles on

Above left: Sir Isaac Newton. A letter to this renowned scientist from one of the chief investigators of Orffyreus's amazing wheel gave a detailed description of the claimed perpetual motion machine

Left: Weissenstein Castle, owned by the German duke who became Orffyreus's patron. It was here that the inventor's great wheel was built and tested at length. Many knowledgeable witnesses testified to its genuineness

Above right: a 19th-century entry into the perpetual motion machine stakes, and (right) one from the 17th century. Innumerable designs for such devices have been produced over the years



which the wheel was suspended at its centre.

After the machine had been running for some time, Baron Fischer made an effort to interest Desaguliers in buying 'the secret' of it for England. But tragedy and mystery were to follow. While negotiations were being conducted among Orffyreus, Fischer and Desaguliers about the way in which his wonderful invention could be exploited, Orffyreus – never the easiest person to get along with – flew into a fit of rage and smashed the wheel into bits. His extraordinary behaviour seems to have been due to a complete misunderstanding concerning Gravesande's study of the wheel.

The unfortunate Professor had merely been assuring himself that the axle and bearings of the wheel could not be used to transmit any motive power from outside. The results of this examination were in Orffyreus's favour, as Gravesande described in a letter afterwards:

My Lord the Landgrave, in the presence (at my request) of the Baron Fischer . . . and other persons, showed



## Perpetual motion

the supports of the machine; we saw the axles uncovered; I examined the plates or brasses on which the axles rested, and, in that examination, there did not appear the slightest trace of communication with the adjoining room. I remember very distinctly the whole of the circumstances of that examination, which put Orffyreus in such a rage with me that, the day after, he broke his machine in pieces, and wrote on the wall that it was [my] impertinent curiosity which was the cause . . .

The last part of the history of Orffyreus's wheel is as full of vagueness and promises as a politician's speech. Some time later it was



reported that he was building another wheel, and it was said that Gravesande and others would be permitted to examine it. But as far as one can learn, nothing came of it – and Orffyreus departs from history, dying in November 1745.

What are we to make of this extraordinary claim for the invention of a perpetual motion machine?

There is a great temptation when faced with awkward facts to sweep them under the carpet of one's mind and so dismiss them from consideration. Unfortunately, if too many facts are treated in this way, an uncomfortable lump results demanding attention. The case of Orffyreus is an excellent example of this.

On the one hand, according to the known laws of mechanics and physics, a perpetual motion machine is impossible. There are examples standing throughout history as monuments to ignorance, misapprehension or arrogance – for they have never worked, however ingenious they seemed. Because a large class of such machines are based on the fallacious theory of the overbalancing wheel (see page 2021), it can safely be said that if one worked, it would cut away the foundations of centuries of scientists' work. In fact it would be almost as revolutionary as a discovery that two plus two made five instead of four.

On the other hand, there is a remarkable amount of cool testimony from a large number of extremely knowledgeable witnesses who were given permission to carry

out protracted tests that, to all intents and purposes, Orffyreus's wheel was a perpetual motion device. This is the fascination of the story: there are awkward facts that ought to be faced.

Three pieces of testimony pile mystery upon mystery, however.

One man, apart from Orffyreus, is reported to have seen the inside of the wheel. This was Duke Karl, his patron. Both Gravesande and Fischer have left records of the Landgrave's remarks. According to the Professor:

The Landgrave being himself present on my examination of this machine, I took the liberty to ask him, as he had seen the inside of it, whether, after being in motion for a certain time, no alteration was made in the component parts; or whether none of those parts might be suspected of concealing some fraud; on which His Serene Highness assured me to the contrary, and that the machine was very simple.

In his turn Baron Fischer states: 'His Highness, who is a perfect mathematician, assured me that the machine is so simple that a carpenter's boy could understand and make it after having seen the interior.'

### Silencing the sceptics

These testimonies make it unlikely in the extreme that, as various sceptics have suggested, an accomplice was hiding inside. In any case, the earlier and smaller wheels could not have accommodated even a dwarf. But there are also the second and third awkward facts.

The second is that the good Professor and others testified that when the wheel was rotating, there could be heard at every turn about eight weights falling gently on the side towards which the wheel turned.

And the third fact is Orffyreus's own description of the mechanism. Granted that he might have been deliberately deceptive in order to keep anyone from stealing his secret, what he said is none the less of interest:

Right: three more designs for machines to achieve perpetual motion. No design has ever been translated into a working model – unless that of Orffyreus, lost to the world when he himself destroyed it in an uncontrollable rage – was the real thing

Left: J.T. Desaguliers of the Royal Society was regaled with information about Orffyreus's invention. It was hoped that he would influence his government to buy the secret of perpetual motion from Orffyreus

Below: the university at Leyden in Holland. Professor W.J. Gravesande, who carried out one of the most thorough examinations of Orffyreus's wheel, was connected with this internationally known seat of learning



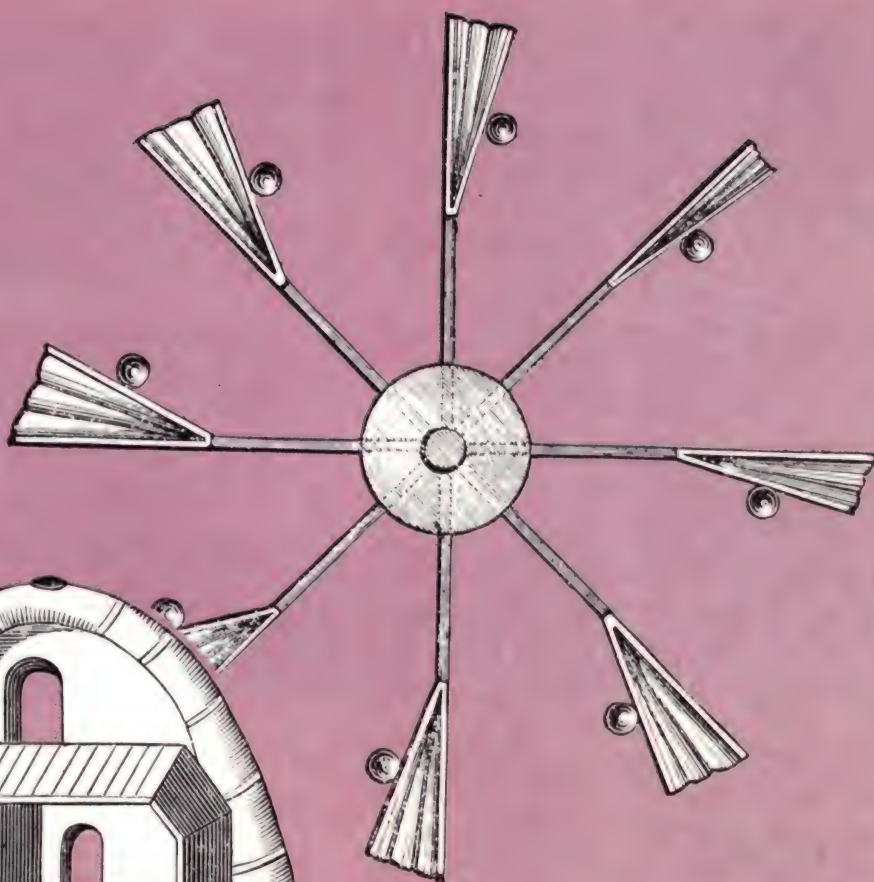
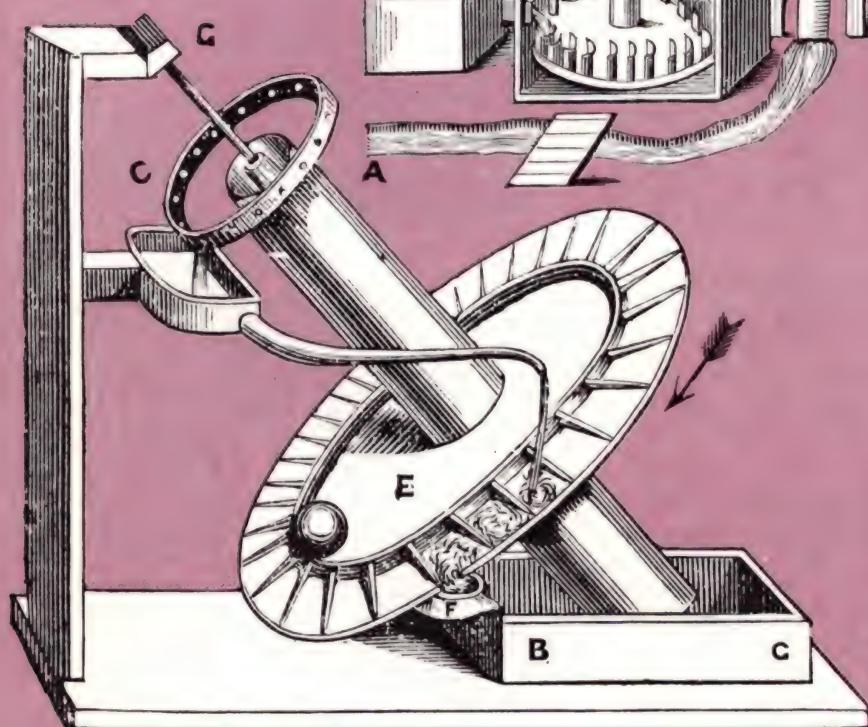


The internal structure of the machine is of a nature according to the laws of mechanical perpetual motion, so arranged that certain disposed weights, once in rotation, gain force from their own swinging, and must continue this movement as long as their structure does not lose its position and arrangement.

Unlike all other automata, such as clocks or springs, or other hanging weights which require winding up, or whose duration depends on the chain which attaches them, these weights, on the contrary, are the essential parts, and constitute the perpetual motion itself; since from them is received the universal movement which they must exercise so long as they remain out of the centre of gravity; and when they

#### Further reading

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Rupert T. Gould, *Oddities*, Geoffrey Bles, 1944  
John Phin, *The seven follies of science*, D. Van Nostrand (New York) 1912



come to be placed together, and so arranged one against another that they can never obtain equilibrium, or the *punctum quietus* which they unceasingly seek in their wonderfully speedy flight, one or other of them must apply its weight at right angles to the axis, which in its turn must also move.

It would seem that Orffyreus's statement, the testimony of the Duke – who was, after all, the 'perfect mathematician' – and the ears of the observers, all in the end tell us that the wheel was one of that large class of perpetual motion machines worked by the overbalancing idea. That principle, scientifically, has as much chance of working as a lead balloon has of flying.

So the mystery remains to this day. Was Orffyreus a fraud, a skilled charlatan who, hitting upon an incredibly clever trick, built and exhibited his wheels to gain fame and fortune? And did all his examiners, clever though they might have been, miss the trick? Or is it possible that this strange, peripatetic figure, eccentric and unloved, obsessed by a dream, hit upon some combination of physical laws that, together, enabled him to circumvent the accepted doctrine of the impossibility of perpetual motion? No sooner are the words written than common sense and the weight of centuries of science deny them. Nevertheless the unrefuted testimony remains. Whatever else it tells us, it surely indicates that the world about us should never be taken at face value.



**To most ordinary people the idea that the US government holds secret details of crashed UFOs sounds like paranoid nonsense. Here, HILARY EVANS shows there is a disturbing amount of evidence that something *is* being officially covered up – but what?**

'SOMEWHERE in the US there is a locked warehouse, guarded as no other place has ever been, accessible only to men of the highest security clearance possible in the government and the Pentagon. Because in that warehouse stronghold lies irrefutable evidence that UFOs exist.'

So, in 1974, American ufologist Otto Binder, author of one of the most objective books on the subject, *What we really know about flying saucers*, expressed the belief that the US government has captured, and holds, a spacecraft from beyond this Earth. It is a belief that is for many an article of faith, but for many others no more than a deliciously



## Picking up the pieces

spine-tingling myth; while there is undoubtedly insufficient substance to the story to justify the former in their total commitment, there is quite enough to make even the most sceptical pause to ask whether, just possibly, there might be a little fire at the source of so much smoke.

In a field of enquiry in which, as we have seen, the evidence is so sparse, so contradictory and so lacking in support, and often emanating from anonymous witnesses or nothing more than hearsay, it is tempting to dismiss the crash-and-capture myth as either the concoction of sensationalist journalists or the projection of individual paranoid. For many years, alternating between these hypotheses, serious ufology managed to avoid challenging the myth.

But things changed when, among other things, the Watergate affair and revelations about the war in South-east Asia showed just how secretive the US government was capable of being, how deviously it could act, how far it was prepared to lie to the American public. For years it had been claimed that the CIA had not the slightest interest in UFOs; but the Freedom of Information Act, which became law in 1976, enabled investigators to obtain documentary proof that, on the contrary, the CIA had long taken a very serious interest (see page 1041.) This information was obtained from the tiny portion of official documentation that the US government had been

Above: Washington DC at night – and in the centre of the picture is the Watergate Hotel, a name now universally synonymous with skulduggery at high levels. Ufologists are concerned that there may be a 'cosmic Watergate' in operation, a cover up centred on rumours and counter-rumours of crashed saucers. Perhaps these stories – and others connected with UFOs – are meant to divert our attention from something quite different . . .

forced to disclose: there still remains an incalculable quantity that it is able to withhold from the public on grounds of national security – what secrets may be contained in it can only be guessed at.

But sufficient has been learned to justify ufologists in taking a closer, harder look at some of the more extreme claims. By the 1970s a new generation of ufologists had appeared on the scene, men and women who were no longer willing to accept reports at their face value, whether it was a question of witness testimony on the one hand or official explanations on the other.

For this, much of the credit must go to

Right: the NASA Flight Research Center at Edwards AFB, California. In 1947 (when it was known as Muroc AFB) it was believed to be the secret destination of the heavily guarded wreckage of a crashed saucer





## Home on the range

White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) in New Mexico is not far, by American standards, from Roswell: some 300 miles (480 kilometres) down US Route 70. Since 1945, WSMR has launched no less than 30,000 assorted pieces of military hardware into the sky – among them the Lance missile (right). Are there any grounds for thinking that the 1947 Roswell saucer – or any other – came from White Sands?

Ufologist William H. Spaulding, of Ground Saucer Watch (GSW), believes so. Research by GSW shows a disproportionately high number of 'unexplained' high-strangeness UFO sightings in New Mexico and its adjoining states. It is worth remembering, too, the enormous range of items – from early USAF Snark cruise missiles to radar balloons and



modified German v-2 rockets – that WSMR handled even in the early days.

Not all of these behaved like conventional rockets and could easily be mistaken for 'alien craft', especially as most firings were made at night until 1964. And as early as December 1946 a v-2 engaged in 'biological research' was blasted 116 miles (185 kilometres) into space: one such test, carrying animals, going awry, could form the single seed for all the pickled-alien myths in ufology. And should such a crash result from an illegal test across state lines, there would be all the more reason to silence civilian witnesses.

White Sands admits that some 7 per cent of its tests are aborted – giving an average of more than one possible crash a week since the Second World War. Small wonder, then, that tales of UFOs and downed saucers abound in the south-western United States.



Left: President Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose golfing vacation may have been interrupted to visit Muroc – to have a look at the wreckage of a crashed saucer (and maybe the bodies of its crew) on 20 February 1954. Someone's eye is on a US president at all hours, but official accounts of Eisenhower's movements during that day seem curiously garbled. Real or imagined, his visit to Muroc is now part of ufological myth

the US government was both very concerned about the incident and extremely embarrassed by it.

There is strong, consistent and clear-cut evidence that an exceptionally large load – the wreckage of the crashed object, perhaps – was carried across country by the military at that time, under conditions of maximum secrecy: a series of reports have been brought to light, each of them trivial in itself, but adding up to a convincing picture. The destination of some of the material was widely alleged to be Muroc Air Force Base, California – and this was the location for one of the most incredible, yet at the same time one of the most enduring, components of the myth. It is claimed that on 20 February 1954 the President of the United States, General Eisenhower, went to Muroc to see the saucers for himself.

In principle, it is perfectly possible. Eisenhower was at that time enjoying a golfing vacation on a friend's ranch at Palm Springs, only 90 miles (150 kilometres) away from Muroc; yet only a week previously he had returned from a quail-shooting holiday in Georgia. Would even the most sporting president, it has been asked, take two such vacations in such close succession?

The movements of the president are, of course, followed closely by the press, who expect to know where he is, and more or less what he is doing, at any hour of the day. Yet on 20 February, for several hours, the press had no idea of his whereabouts. It was even rumoured that he was dead. A press conference was hastily called to explain that he had had to have emergency dental treatment. Some years later the dentist's family was questioned; they had a vague notion that something of the sort might have happened – a surprisingly casual attitude to what should

veteran ufologist Leonard Stringfield, who has almost single-handedly put together evidence that the American government has UFOs and UFO entities in its possession. The result of his efforts is a dossier of testimony that, while largely emanating from individuals who prefer to remain anonymous, nevertheless is coherent and consistent to an impressive degree. Meanwhile, operating on a narrower front but in greater depth, William Moore and Stanton Friedman, along with Charles Berlitz, uncovered the intricacies of the Roswell incident (see page 2034), which established beyond any reasonable doubt that an unidentified object – not necessarily of alien origin – got into trouble over New Mexico in 1947, and that





have been a very memorable event!

In May 1954 a certain Gerald Light, in company with some distinguished visitors, went to Muroc, and wrote a letter after his visit describing how he had seen five separate and distinct extra-terrestrial craft being studied by the air force, and confirming Eisenhower's visit. Unfortunately, virtually nothing is known about Light, though the letter he wrote undoubtedly exists. British UFO author Desmond Leslie also claimed to have spoken to USAF personnel who confirmed the Eisenhower visit, and Frank Scully's widow, in support of her husband's maligned book *Behind the flying saucers* (see page 1990), stated that they once employed a carpenter who had at one time worked at the nearby Muroc base, and he too spoke of the presidential visit. An author who collaborated with George Adamski (see page 203) and an anonymous workman may not be the most convincing witnesses, yet their testimony is both independent and consistent.

Faced with evidence that is at the same time so specific and so inconclusive, several theorists have suggested that the entire UFO phenomenon is a deliberate smokescreen put out by governments to conceal a more sinister truth. There was ironic confirmation of this in 1977, when on 20 September the inhabitants of the Soviet city of Petrozavodsk saw a 'jellyfish-like' object in the pre-dawn sky. The immediate reaction of the witnesses was that it was a UFO, and the incident aroused great interest throughout the country and even abroad. The Soviet government, like other governments round the world, denied the existence of UFOs – yet here was a sighting it could not deny.

And indeed it could not – but for quite a different reason than the public supposed. For what witnesses had seen was the launching of the Kosmos-955 spy satellite from the secret base at Plesetsk – but this was, of course, an explanation the Soviet authorities could not reveal. Rather than break security,

The impenetrable depths of a Canadian forest where, some ufologists suggest, secret terrestrial organisations are busy manufacturing UFOs. But if this is so, why are so many different kinds of UFO seen in widely different places, including densely populated areas such as New York and London?

they had no choice but to allow the Russian public to go on believing they had seen a UFO; politically, it was better that it should be thought a UFO than one of their own secret devices!

'The CIA has proof that UFOs exist' was the headline to an article in *UFO Report* in 1977, in which a former US intelligence agent confessed that the CIA had deliberately suppressed evidence about UFOs. But suppose these leaks were themselves a part of the CIA's continuing campaign to distract attention from their own research projects?

### What on Earth?

Such hypotheses are discounted by many people on the grounds that UFOs apparently display a technology so far ahead of any that we have achieved as to make it unlikely that such advances have been made in secret by any Earth government. But if the UFOs are indeed of earthly origin, where is their base? In the Canadian forests, as one investigator has suggested? It seems improbable. Why are they seen in so many different forms and in so many different places? Why are there so many reports of occupants who are noticeably different from humans? There are countless objections to the 'home-made' hypothesis.

But there is also much supporting evidence. In a case of December 1980 three people, two middle-aged women and a child, driving in Texas, saw a huge glowing object from their car, and stopped to look at it. They suffered burns severe enough to keep one of them in hospital for a week: whatever the object was, it was capable of emitting dangerous radiation at a considerable distance. Surely the US government would not be experimenting with so dangerous a device in a public place? But if it was not operated by or with the co-operation of the US military, why was it accompanied – as all three witnesses firmly testify – by some 23 helicopters, of a type used by the USAF?

This case – the Cash-Landrum case – is under active investigation by the Mutual UFO Investigation Network (MUFON); if that investigation reaches a clear conclusion, it could settle the question of UFO origins, for some cases if not for every one, once and for all. Until then, it is a matter of weighing one explanation against another.

But such stories, however improbable, are plentiful; there are far more than have been mentioned in these articles. While each one of them is at best a plausible anecdote, together they make up a coherent body of evidence that suggests that the US government, and possibly other governments elsewhere, have in their possession devices that, whether they are extra-terrestrial UFOs or super-secret military devices, these powers do not wish the public to know about. We cannot say for certain what is being covered up; but that a cover up exists seems to be established beyond reasonable doubt.

#### Further reading

Raymond E. Fowler,  
*Casebook of a UFO  
investigator*, Prentice Hall  
(New York) 1981  
Frank Scully, *Behind the  
flying saucers*, Gollancz 1950  
Leonard H. Stringfield,  
*Situation red: the UFO  
siege*, Doubleday (New  
York) 1977  
Renato Vesco, *Intercept but  
don't shoot*, Grove Press  
(New York) 1971



# Post script

Your letters to  
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

On 9 June 1982 I was just closing the field gate after finishing haymaking for the day and was joining my three friends to go home when suddenly we saw a bright pinky-red ball coming towards us from north-north-east. The ball appeared to be about a mile [1.6 kilometres] away and looked as if it was about to come straight up through the valley.

We set off and ran towards it; it seemed to be about 200 feet [60 metres] off the ground and glowed uniformly with a pinky-red colour.

Having run about 100 yards [90 metres] we stopped. The ball started to drop towards the ground behind a tree. It was then that I estimated it must have been about 5 miles [8 kilometres] away – much further than I had first thought. After a few seconds the object reappeared, rising above the tree, then dipping down behind it again. That was the last we saw of the object itself, although as we stood watching we saw a strange light flashing from behind the tree for about 10 minutes or so. All this took place around 9.15 p.m. when dusk was falling.

When we reached the farm we told the rest of the haymakers about our experience; most of them just laughed it off – but the boss and his wife said they had seen it from the farmhouse. So there were at least five witnesses to the UFO. Perhaps other people in the area also saw it?

Yours faithfully,  
Andrew Matthews

Clapton, Somerset

Dear Sir,

I should like to point out that many of the inns called the 'Black Dog' (see page 1712 in issue 86 of *The Unexplained*) that are found in Dorset owe their origin to the first Labrador dog brought into this country, reputedly through one of the Dorset ports (possibly Weymouth for there is an old inn there called the 'Black Dog'), rather than to the mysterious black dogs of folklore. In fact Dorset has no local 'black dog' legends and therefore has no 'pet name' for such a phenomenal creature as in other parts of the country.

I don't wish to refute Simon Innes's point about inn names totally, but merely want to point out that just because an inn is called the Black Dog this does not automatically imply that the area is haunted by a supernatural entity.

Yours faithfully,  
Andrew Field

London

Dear Sir,

I always look forward to reading *Postscript* every week and now I look forward to contributing to it.

Up to the age of 21 I was very interested in Spiritualism, going to a number of seances. During this time I discovered I had a certain clairvoyant faculty – and also I found I could practise psychometry (object reading).

When I was about 21, I was lying in bed late at night and suddenly felt that there was somebody in my room. I was then fully awake. A woman's voice said very clearly and distinctly, 'I am now leaving you, Harland.'

My mother-in-law was in hospital, having her foot amputated. On the day of the operation, about an

hour before breakfast, I told my wife I felt my mother-in-law was going to die. Shortly afterwards, during breakfast, we heard a noise coming from the larder (its door was open and we could see into it clearly). A knife that had been resting on a butter plate lifted itself off, spun in the air and fell to the ground. One hour later we received a telegram informing us of my mother-in-law's death.

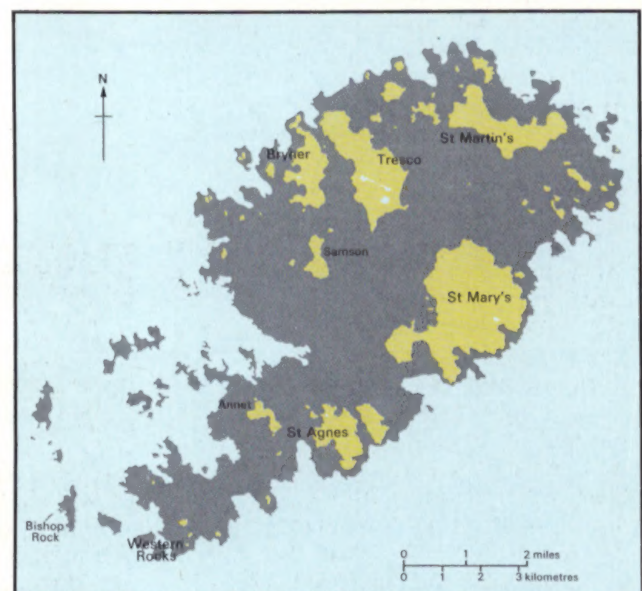
About 12 years after that my wife died; a week after her death, rapping noises began on the wall by our bed and continued nightly for weeks after that, no matter what time I retired. There would always be just six raps – I believe she was trying to comfort me with proof of her presence. And one night I actually saw her, standing by my bed. On another occasion I felt her turn over in bed beside me – perhaps she was there in her astral body?

Yours faithfully,  
Harland Dunkley

Tunbridge Wells, Kent

*Many bereaved people report that they have seen, heard, or in some way sensed, their dead loved ones. We have heard of the phenomenon taking various forms – from a familiar clearing of the throat, the distinct aroma of a late husband's pipe tobacco, and characteristic footsteps, to full-form (and apparently solid) materialisations. And toddlers have sometimes announced that they have just been playing with the deceased person, or dogs rush towards an open door wagging their tails delightedly – but no one can be seen there. The medical profession tends to take the view that grief distorts our perceptions, and the 'apparitions' are a projected form of wish-fulfilment, bringing our loved ones back, however briefly. But much of the literature of psychical research indicates that apparitions can have a certain objectivity, and even a sense of purpose.*

*Erratum: on page 1788 in issue 90 of The Unexplained, we inadvertently printed the map of the Scilly Isles upside down. It should look like this:*





# THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES

## 33 Troy Town maze, Scilly Isles

This maze on the westernmost tip of St Agnes in the Scilly Isles is constructed of small stones. Its date is unknown, and though its name suggests antiquity, some say it was built by a local lighthouse keeper only 250 years ago. It is similar to the old pebble mazes of the Vikings.

## 34 Horns of consecration, Crete

Horns of consecration such as these once stood on the roofs of shrines in the great Palace of Knossos (built mainly between 1800–1550 BC). This monument, about 4 feet (1.2 metres) high, now stands on a wall in the palace. The shape is symbolic of the Minoan bull-god's horns.

## 35 Woodhenge, England

This ancient circular earthwork in southern Wiltshire is 200 feet (60 metres) in diameter and consists of five concentric rings with perimeters of 40, 60, 80, 140 and 160 megalithic yards. It surrounds what was probably a roofed building whose purpose is a mystery.

## 36 Superstition Mountains, USA

Long regarded as an evil place by the American Indians of the region, the Superstition Mountains rise starkly from the desert about 40 miles (65 kilometres) east of Phoenix, Arizona. Many seekers of the treasures believed to be buried there have disappeared in mysterious circumstances.

## 37 Giant's causeway, Northern Ireland

Local legend has it that this promontory on the northern coast of County Antrim was built by giants as a roadway. Nearly 40 feet (12 metres) wide in places, it consists of thousands of basalt pillars, each 15 to 20 inches (35 to 50 centimetres) across, some 20 feet (6 metres) high.

## 38 Lydian necropolis, Turkey

Dating from about 600 BC, the Lydian necropolis comprises at least 100 tombs in the form of mounds. It is on the edge of Lake Marmara Gölü (once Lake Gyges) in west central Turkey. The largest tomb in this royal cemetery may be that of King Alyattes, father of the last king of Lydia.

## 39 Pueblo settlement, USA

It is not known why this Pueblo Indian settlement at Frijoles Canyon in New Mexico was abandoned in 1550 after some 300 years of existence, for there is no archaeological evidence of a combat or plague. The site is unusual of its kind because it has cave dwellings as well as buildings.

## 40 Mount Kinubari, Japan

Old tombstones stand sentinel in a burial cave in Mt Kinubari, which is part of the hilly surrounds of the coastal city of Kamakura in Japan. This particular site, believed to date from the late 12th century, contains over 2000 bodies – probably those of samurai and other soldiers.